

THE ROYAL SCHOOL OF CHURCH MUSIC Lincoln Area

Dean's Chorister & Bishop's Chorister Awards ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

DEAN'S CHORISTER AWARDS (BRONZE STANDARD)

- 1 The award is open to all singers – children and adults. Where an adult is presented for the award, at their choice they may sing either the melody line or their own part where appropriate.
- 2 Candidates for this award, both children and adults, will normally have already made significant progress within the context of their local choir on the *Voice for Life* scheme (they should have completed Dark Blue level). Applications from candidates not meeting this criterion may be accepted subject to the prior approval of the ETO.
- 3 Candidates should normally have sung regularly in a church choir for a minimum of 18 months and should have achieved at least a 75% attendance against each church's expected compulsory attendance (including authorised absences)

BISHOP'S CHORISTER AWARDS (SILVER STANDARD)

- 1 The award is open to all singers – children and adults. Where an adult is presented for the award they must sing their own part. Candidates should have already achieved the Dean's Chorister (Bronze Standard) Award and should have completed Red level of *Voice for Life*
- 2 Applications from candidates not meeting this criterion may be accepted subject to the prior approval of the ETO.

GENERAL INFORMATION

- 1 Copies of all music to be sung must be provided for the examiner's use. **The production of illegally photocopied material will result in the cancellation of the examination entry.**
- 2 It is preferable that candidates provide their own accompanist. **If an RSCM accompanist is required, this should be indicated at the time of entry** - an additional fee may be payable. After Section A of the examination has been completed, the accompanist should leave the examination room.

- 3 Candidates will be provided with an appropriate room, away from the examination room, in which to warm up prior to the examination. Both the warm-up room and the examination room will be heated if necessary.
- 4 The awards will be examined by a single examiner, who will have been validated by the RSCM.
- 5 The awards are marked out of 100. 60 marks are required for a pass. A mark of at least 75 will be a pass with merit, and a mark of 85 or over will be a pass with distinction.
- 6 **TESTIMONIALS.** The entry form for each candidate for either award should be accompanied by **two, separate, signed testimonials** - one from the Choirtrainer, and one from the incumbent. Should there be no incumbent in the parish (during an interregnum, for example), the second testimonial should be provided by a Churchwarden.
- 7 The correct fee must be sent with the entry form(s) to the ETO. Cheques should be made payable to **RSCM Lincoln Area**.

Exemplar materials for Section B of both awards can be found at the back of this syllabus. In addition, it should be noted that the Lincoln Area organises training events for candidates considering entering for these awards. Although attendance at such events is not a requirement for entry, it is highly advisable. Exemplar materials will also be available then.

APPEALS PROCEDURE

Choirtrainers are asked to understand that, in the interests of preserving the value of the awards to candidates who win them, and to maintain reasonable equivalence to similar awards in other areas, it is necessary to set defined standards for succeeding in these awards. It is unfortunately occasionally the case that a candidate, however well prepared, does not come up to the required level. It should also be remembered that, whilst examiners do their best to put choristers at ease, candidates may occasionally not perform as well as expected 'on the day'.

In entering for an award, the candidate and Choirtrainer are deemed to accept the musical judgement of the examiner.

In exceptional circumstances, appeals may be considered according to the following procedure, which is similar to the practice of the major examining boards.

Appeals must be made in writing to the Education and Training Officer by the Choirtrainer who entered the candidate, setting out in detail the grounds on which the appeal is lodged. **Under no circumstances is the examiner to be contacted direct.**

To cover expenses, appeals must be accompanied by a fee of £10 (the cheque to be made payable to **RSCM Lincoln Area**). In the event that the appeal is successful, the fee will be refunded. Appeals must be lodged within seven days of receiving the results. This is to ensure that the circumstances of the examination remain fresh in everyone's memory.

Appeals which question the mark awarded without further justification will not be accepted.

Two broad grounds for appeal which may typically be considered are:

- (a) the candidate being expected to do something which is outside the scope of the syllabus, or
- (b) a clear inconsistency between the written comments and the marks awarded.

If an appeal is received, it will be considered by the Awards Secretary, the Area Chairman and the examiner. One of two outcomes will result:

- 1 the mark originally awarded may be confirmed, or
- 2 the candidate may be offered a re-examination with a different examiner at a mutually convenient time. The outcome of any such re-examination will be deemed final.

The Awards Secretary will notify the outcome of the appeal to the Choir Trainer in writing. The target time for resolving appeals is 21 days from the date of receipt.

In the event that the choirtrainer is unhappy with the outcome of the appeal, a final appeal may be made in writing to The Warden, RSCM, Cleveland Lodge, Westhumble, DORKING, RH5 6BW, setting out in detail the grounds on which the appeal is lodged, no later than seven days after receiving the outcome of the first appeal. After due consultation, and not later than one further month, a response will be issued by the Warden, whose decision is final. If the appeal is successful, a re-examination or alternatively a full refund of the entry fee will be offered.

Appeals will be considered only for candidates who have failed. No appeal will be considered regarding the level of mark awarded to a candidate who has passed.

Dean's Chorister Award (Bronze Level) Syllabus

(Applies from January 2004 until further notice)

Section A – Using the Voice Well

1. HYMN

Maximum 15 marks (9 to pass)

The candidate is required to prepare one hymn from the following list:

- Be still for the presence (Spirit) of the Lord (Be Still)
- City of God (Richmond)
- Come thou long-expected Jesus (Cross of Jesus or Stuttgart)
- For Mary, Mother of our Lord (St. Botolph)
- How sweet the name of Jesus sounds (St. Peter)
- Tell out my soul (Woodlands)

Candidates should prepare three verses, the second of which they will be expected to sing unaccompanied.

2. PSALM

Maximum 15 marks (9 to pass)

The candidate is required to sing:

Either: Eight consecutive verses (excluding the Gloria) of the melody (or their own voice part) from a psalm to **either** Anglican chant **or** plainsong.

Or: The whole setting of a responsorial psalm (including refrain).

3. PREPARED ITEM

Maximum 20 marks (12 to pass)

The candidate is required to prepare the melody (or their own voice part) of one item from the following list:

- Attwood Turn thy face from my sins
- Elgar Ave verum corpus
- Hilton Lord, for thy tender mercy's sake
- How Day by day
- Lindley Ave Maria (solo, then either part)
- Mozart Ave verum corpus
- Ogden The Fruits of the land
- Rutter A Gaelic Blessing
- Shephard Sing choirs of heaven
- Tye O come ye servants of the Lord

Section B – Musical Skills and Understanding

1. QUICKNESS OF LEARNING

Maximum 10 marks (6 to pass)

Some unfamiliar music will be given to the candidate and played through once. The candidate will then be required to sing the item with some keyboard support.

2. & 3. FURTHER QUESTIONS AND AURAL TESTS

Maximum 10 marks (6 to pass)

Using the prepared item (Section A - No.3) as a starting point, questions will be asked to ascertain candidates' knowledge of:

- Notes of the treble stave
- Time values of notes
- Time signatures (simple time)
- Key signatures (up to three sharps and three flats)
- Simple Italian musical terms

Candidates will then be expected to:

1. Name the intervals (2nd, 3rd, 4th or 5th) between two notes within a major scale (with the tonic as the lower note). The notes will be played separately.
2. Sing degrees of a major scale, the tonic being given first.
3. Sing the upper or lower of two notes played together.
4. Clap a two bar rhythm (in simple time) after two playings.

Section C

REPERTOIRE

Maximum 10 marks (6 to pass)

Candidates will be asked questions, appropriate to their age or experience, on their prepared pieces. The following topics should be prepared for discussion:

1. Text and music (origin, style, meaning, how the music reflects the text)
 2. Context (historical, musical, liturgical where relevant)
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Typical questions on repertoire at Bronze standard would be:

“Describe the mood of this piece, and say generally how the text is reflected in the music.”

“When was the text (*or*, the music) written, and by whom?”

“In what season of the Church’s year might this piece suitably be sung?”

“In which part of your Sunday morning service might this piece be sung?”

“Name another piece, or a hymn or song, that your choir might sing at the same season or occasion.”

Section D

CHOIR IN CONTEXT

Maximum 20 marks (12 to pass)

1. Bible

Thinking back to the prepared psalm, candidates will be asked to describe what kind of prayer it is (joyful, sorrowful, praise, thanksgiving etc.) referring to the words to support their views.

2. Liturgy

- a) Candidates will be asked to describe the sung parts of the form of evening prayer or eucharist (or similar service) with which they are familiar.
- b) Candidates should choose beforehand one hymn, worship song or anthem suitable for one season (eg. Easter) or festival (eg. All Saints) celebrated in their church. Candidates will be asked to explain the significance of their choice and of the festival or season chosen. (Candidates should bring two copies of their chosen piece.)

3. Ministry

Candidates will be asked to describe what motivates and inspires them as singers in a church choir.

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Bishop's Chorister Award (Silver Level) Syllabus

(Applies from January 2004 until further notice)

Section A – Using the Voice Well

1. HYMN

Maximum 15 marks (9 to pass)

The candidate should prepare four hymns:

1. My song is love unknown (Love unknown)
2. Alleluia, sing to Jesus (Hyfrydol)
3. Dear Lord and Father of mankind (Repton)
4. All my hope on God is founded (Michael)

The examiner will select one of these hymns to be sung in the examination. The candidate will be asked to sing the first three verses of the hymn, singing the second verse unaccompanied.

2. PSALM

Maximum 15 marks (9 to pass)

The candidate is required to sing their own voice part of:

Either: Eight consecutive verses and the Gloria from a psalm to **either** Anglican chant **or** plainsong.

Or: The whole setting of a responsorial psalm (including refrain).

Some verses, as indicated by the examiner, should be sung unaccompanied

3. PREPARED ITEM

Maximum 20 marks (12 to pass)

The candidate is required to sing their own voice part of one item from the following list:

- Archer My song is love unknown
- Byrd Ave verum corpus
- Pitoni Cantate Domino
- Parry My soul, there is a country
- Howells My eyes for beauty pine
- Ireland Ex ore innocentium
- Ives Listen, sweet dove
- Joubert O Lorde, the maker of al thing
- Rutter For the beauty of the earth
- Vaughan Williams The Call (from *Five Mystical Songs*)

Section B – Musical Skills and Understanding

1. SIGHT READING

Maximum 10 marks (6 to pass)

The candidate will be required to sing at sight a short vocal extract which will be accompanied. This will be equivalent in standard to Associated Board Grade 6. About 30 seconds will be given for preparation. The keynote and starting note will be given.

2. & 3. FURTHER QUESTIONS AND AURAL TESTS

Maximum 10 marks (6 to pass)

Using the prepared item (Section A - No.3) as a starting point, questions will be asked to ascertain candidates' knowledge of:

- Notes of the treble and bass stave
- Time values of notes and rests including ties and dotted notes
- Time signatures (simple and compound)
- Key signatures (up to five sharps or flats)
- Commonly used Italian terms and musical symbols

Candidates will then be expected to:

1. Sing a four-bar melodic phrase unaccompanied, after two playings.
2. Identify the following intervals, each heard not more than twice (both notes played simultaneously): major and minor 3rd, perfect 4th and 5th. Two or three examples will be given.
3. Clap a four-bar rhythm after two playings.
4. Sing the upper, middle and lower notes of a common chord.

Section C

REPERTOIRE

Maximum 10 marks (6 to pass)

Candidates will be asked questions, appropriate to their age or experience, on their prepared pieces. The following topics should be prepared for discussion:

1. Text and music (origin, style, meaning, how the music reflects the text)
2. Context (historical, musical, liturgical where relevant)

In addition to the typical questions given above at Bronze standard, questions at Silver standard might be:

“Give an example of a passage where the music (of your piece) varies to reflect the meaning of the text.”

“In which musical period did this composer live?”

“Name a piece written around the same time, by a different composer, and say whether it is similar.”

Section D

CHOIR IN CONTEXT

Maximum 20 marks (12 to pass)

4. Bible

Candidates will be asked to explain the origins in the Bible of two of the following liturgical texts, chosen by the examiner: *Our Father, Holy Holy Holy, Glory to God, Lamb of God, Magnificat, Nunc Dimittis*

5. Liturgy

- a) Candidates will be asked to describe the sung parts of the form of morning prayer or eucharist (or similar service) with which they are familiar.
- b) Candidates should choose beforehand one hymn, worship song or anthem suitable for one season (eg. Easter) or festival (eg. All Saints) celebrated in their church. Candidates will be asked to explain the significance of their choice and of the festival or season chosen. (Candidates should bring two copies of their chosen piece.)

6. Ministry

Candidates will be asked to explain, with reference to a chosen piece of music, how music helps people to pray.

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APPENDIX 1

Assessment Criteria for Dean's Chorister Award (Bronze Level)

Section A – Using the Voice well

The performance of each piece will be assessed on the following:

1. Posture and presentation

Good candidates will:

- Stand and hold their music well throughout the examination.

Poor candidates may:

- Bury their head in their music and sing into their copy.
- Slouch, tap their feet or fidget as they sing.

2. Vocal technique: breath management, tone, diction, range

Good candidates will:

- Breathe in appropriate places.
- Sustain the sound to the end of a line or phrase.
- Produce good, full tone, even at the extremes of their range.
- Project the voice well.
- Produce good vowel sounds.
- Articulate consonants clearly.

Poor candidates may:

- Produce uneven, breathy tone.
- Be unable to sustain to the end of a phrase.
- Strain for high or low notes.
- Have weak or unprojected tone.
- Have poor diction.

3. General musicianship: accuracy, expression, sensitivity

Good candidates will:

- Sing notes and rhythms accurately and with good intonation.
- Be able to keep a steady pulse.
- Demonstrate a good dynamic range and an understanding of phrasing and articulation.
- Show an appreciation of musical style appropriate to the piece being sung.
- Be able to convey the mood of the music and reflect the meaning of the text.
- Sing confidently and with great sensitivity.

Poor candidates may:

- Sing frequently out of tune.
- Make a large number of errors of pitch and rhythm.
- Have a tendency either to rush or to slow down without good musical reason.
- Reveal little awareness of dynamics, phrasing and articulation.
- Sing with little regard for the mood or musical style of the piece.
- Falter and appear to lack confidence.

Section B – Musical Skills and Understanding

1. Musical skills

Good candidates will:

- Sight-read fluently with a high proportion of the notes correct and sung in tune.
- Maintain the tempo and rhythm even when mistakes are made.
- Show an awareness of dynamics, phrasing and articulation.
- Sound confident and sing with conviction even when wrong.
- Maintain good tone.
- Breathe in appropriate places.
- Be accurate in aural tests, with all sung responses in tune and clapped responses rhythmic and steady.

Poor candidates may:

- Make a large number of rhythmic and pitching errors in sight-reading tests.
- Falter and stumble, disregarding the tempo and rhythm.
- Show little awareness of dynamics, phrasing and articulation.
- Stop when a mistake is made.
- Sing with poor tone and breathe inappropriately.
- Be highly inaccurate in aural tests with responses out of tune or rhythmically weak.

2. Musical understanding

Musical understanding will be assessed not only through the “further questions” indicated above, but throughout each candidate’s performance.

Good candidates will:

- Demonstrate their knowledge of notation and theory by singing their repertoire and performing quickness of learning and aural tests with a high degree of accuracy.
- Observe common Italian terms, musical symbols and dynamic markings and be able to explain what they mean if asked.
- Demonstrate their understanding of intervals in the aural tests and be able to identify them if asked.

Poor candidates may:

- Demonstrate a poor understanding of notation and theory by making a large number of errors when they sing their repertoire and perform sight-reading and aural tests.
- Fail to observe Italian terms, musical symbols and dynamic markings and be unable to explain them if asked.
- Make mistakes in pitching intervals and be unable to identify intervals in aural tests.

Section C - Repertoire

Good candidates will:

- Be able to talk knowledgeably about the music they sing with regard to the period in which it was written, the features of the musical style, and the origins and the meaning of the text.

Poor candidates may:

- Be unable to demonstrate their knowledge of the music they sing beyond what is on the page.

